

Ness Information Service

Nessletter No. 36

October 1979

University of Birmingham

Roger Grimshaw and Paul Lester, authors of the pamphlet 'The Meaning Of The Loch Ness Monster', would like to hear from any members of the Ness Information Service who would like to take part in a survey. A questionnaire with an opportunity for extended replies will be sent to all those who write. It intends to give a picture of the social background of those interested in the monster, and the reasons they give for their interest. The results will remain entirely confidential. No individuals will be identified in any published work, and hopefully the results of the survey will be incorporated in a book the authors are writing about the monster. Also a digest of the findings will be printed in due course in a 'Nessletter'.

The results should be interesting, they would have been even more so if it had been carried out with the Loch Ness Investigation. Will members please support this project. The address is:- Paul Lester, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Birmingham, P.O. Box 363, Birmingham B15 2TT.

Tony Healey

I had a visit from Tony, an Australian, in mid-September as he was travelling south from Loch Ness to London. Unfortunately it was a Monday when he called, and we just had the evening together but we made the most of it. I was fascinated by his story, he left home in Australia in April 1978 and has been on a round-the-world monster 'safari' since. His first stop was Fiji where he looked into the legend of the 'Leka'. Stories of these creatures go back into history in the folklore of the island. They are little people somewhat in the mould of the Irish leprechauns, but covered in hair or fur. There had been a report of some school children seeing one just a week before Tony's visit. So he was able to get some up to date information about the situation.

He then went on to North America where he spent the following year touring the various areas reported to have strange phenomenon. He started with the areas that can be grouped under the title of the Pacific Northwest. There he met many of the people concerned in the hunt for the 'Bigfoot'. Then on to Florida on the track of the 'Skunk Ape', this was followed by a trip to the Bahamas. There are no monkeys in the Bahamas but there are reports of very large monkey-like creatures. Tony told me the area were these 'Yay-Ho' are supposed to be is very dangerous. Not natural dangers but smugglers and dope-runners with murder and people going missing being regular happenings. He was advised not to go to the coastal area concerned by the authorities, and he took the advice. The Canadian lakes were on his list and he visited a number among them being Lake Okanagan.

He flew to Iceland in April 1979 after spending a year in North America. It was his intention to gather information on the 'Skrimsli', which is the Icelandic monster reported to live in the Lagarflot, a large fresh-water lake in eastern Iceland. Unfortunately it was Easter weekend when he arrived for a week long stop-over, and according to Tony Iceland closes to Easter. Public transport is almost non-existent, and most places are closed, so he was unable to reach his intended destination. So it was on to Ireland for a month of little people and water creatures.

He next travelled to Britain, spending eight weeks in Scotland dividing the time between Lochs Ness and Morar.

I missed him when I was up at Loch Ness, he was at Loch Morar for the two weeks. He did manage to meet many of the people concerned in the Loch Ness search, and I was very pleased he took the time to come and visit me.

He was to spend some time in London making arrangements for a ten week trip to Nepal where he hopes to do some work on the 'Yeti'. While there he will be joined for three weeks by Ted Ernst Jr., who is vice president of the American Anthropological Research Foundation, They first met when Tony was in Bigfoot country.

Tony plans to finish his journeys with a month in Malasia, he will work from Kuala Lumpur. He will be gathering information about the large unknown creatures reported to live in the Tasek Bera. This is a large swampy lake surrounded by thick jungle which is very hard to get to, involving either a difficult river trip or a helicopter flight.

In all Tony estimates he will have visited some 22 locations reported to have strange water creatures by the time he returns to Australia in February 1980. He then plans to string all the legends, reports and anecdotes together into a book or, owing to the volume of material he has gathered perhaps, two. I asked him how such a trip was financed. The answer is by hard work and forward planning. Tony having worked two jobs for a number of years after he decided the trip was a possibility. The funds he was able to put by were used as carefully as possible, for example while in Scotland he lived and travelled in an old Ford Scwt van, which was sold before he left Britain.

While at Loch Morar Tony met up with an American, Todd Martin of Nebraska, they joined forces and were camped at the head of Tarbet bay just east of Swordlands on the northern shore of the loch. On August 15th 1979 at approximately 11.30 a.m. they had a strange experience. There was light overcast with sun shining through in patches, there was a light ripple in the bay with heavier ripple further out, there was a breeze from the S.W., the direction of Meoble. Todd had been up the hillside, Tony was at the shore and heard him break a dead branch off a tree. Some 20-30 seconds he noticed a roughly oval area of uplifting, vibrating, disturbed water about 6 to 7 feet across and 7 or 8 feet long. Many little splashes around edge and right across the length and breadth of it. Water splashing and chopping to a height of perhaps 8 inches. He looked away, incredulously, and back again, and realised that the disturbance was beginning to move slowly away from the bank.

When he first saw it, it was 100 yards or less from him, close to a rock with a dead sapling on it, it was only about 10 yards from the rock. It seemed to accelerate gradually to a fast walking pace, and proceeded for some 25 to 35 yards in a southerly direction. He did not know what it was and thought perhaps it was a group of fish, salmon swimming together as he had been told sometimes happens by one of the locals he had met. He called to Todd, quietly, as he felt the animal or animals were quite close enough to hear him. He now felt sure that the disturbance was not caused by fish, it seemed too large. Water was being kicked up in front and splashing around the edges. But when it first started to move the disturbance did seem to possibly have an irregular leading edge, not one 'v' wake. Tony started to take pictures, using his Nikon EL2 fitted with a 55mm lens. At this time he thought he saw 2 or 3 humps among the disturbance. They could have been dark coloured waves but in any case they were about 12 inches long at the base and about 6 inches high. The disturbance now ceased, whatever had been making it submerged. Todd was with Tony by now and took some photographs as it reappeared again. It was further out, and had stopped moving forward. Then it began to accelerate again, covered a shorter distance and died down again. Started up again further out on approximately the same course, perhaps curving a little to the west.

In all the disturbance appeared and subsided 4 or 5 times including the first appearance, and the whole incident lasted about a minute. When it finally disappeared it was some 200 to 300 yards away, level with or a little beyond the westerly headland of the bay. They immediately went to the point but there was no sign of anything out in the body of the loch, they then took some photographs for comparison. They later checked the depth of water where the disturbance was first seen and found it 20 feet deep.

I saw prints of the pictures Tony had taken, when he visited me. There was a very definite area of disturbed water with clearly defined edges. Unfortunately nothing else of value is shown, a very strange event. Perhaps Tony will have better luck when he is in the Tasek Bera. In any case I look forward to his book.

### Sightings

Macfarlane, September 1977. I had a very nice letter from Doug Macfarlane with the following account. He had been interested in the animals in Loch Ness since he read Tim Dinsdale's book, and for about twelve years had been visiting the loch for his holidays. He and his wife had a short holiday there early in September 1977. After an overnight stop at Fort Augustus, they made their way to Castle Urquhart. While there, watching the loch, he noticed a movement on the water near the opposite shore, which was mirror calm. Using 7 x 50 binoculars he could see a V wake on the calm surface with waves six inches to a foot high. The wake was moving towards Dores at a good speed, nothing could be seen braking the surface. He watched the wake for about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile and then it stopped completely and disappeared. There were no boats moving in the area either before or during the sighting. They now moved on through Inverness and back to the lochside at one of the lay-bys south of the village of Dores. Two days later at the same lay-by Doug turned from a task at his car, and saw a head in the water! He pointed it out to his wife, who thought it was a football. It was round, black and shining with the sun reflecting off it. It then turned right and left and they could see it had a nose or muzzle and it was obviously a head similar to a seals. They could see neither eyes nor ears, but it appeared to be looking in their direction. He measured the distance afterwards, by pacing it out, and it was 110 yards and the head was about 20 yards offshore. It was steady and not bobbing in the waves which were six inches high, but the waves were not braking over the head. He moved a little to reach his binoculars and saw the animal tip its head back and submerge straight down with no disturbance. Doug says the head was at least the size of a rugby ball and he and his wife agree that the nearest animal's head they have seen to it was a large sea lion in a zoo.

In September this year they met Tim Dinsdale at the same lay-by and were introduced to Peter Smith, and found out their sighting was about a fortnight after he had taken his film and at almost the same place.

'Rubia', July 1979. Mr. J. O. Harwood sent me a copy of part of the narrative log of the 'Rubia', a motor auxiliary yacht on passage through the Caledonian Canal. Mr Harwood and Lt. Col. D Ramsey-Brown arrived in Inverness at the Rex Marina in Muirtown Basin to take over the 'Rubia' late on 26th July 1979. The following day they started through the canal, going through the Muirtown Locks and to the Dochgarroch Lock, entering Loch Ness at 1340. There was only an intermittent light breeze, blowing straight down the loch from the West. So they were proceeding under engine power.

Following sandwiches (and one beer each!) JOH was tidying up below at 1425 and was called on deck by D.R.B. to look at something". The "something" was approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile ahead, crossing 'Rubia's' bows very slowly, moving from North to South. At first glance it looked like a seaweed covered log that was just awash but under the glasses a definite vertical undulation was seen and a lift above the surface of the water of some 6"-9". Total length visible at one time was something between 6ft and 8ft. width very hard to judge but not more than 12"-15".

The period of observation through the glasses was probably less than half a minute. The total time of observation by D.R.B. was about two minutes. Seen through the glasses the "something" had the appearance of tangled brown seaweed or matted hair, colour was brown. There was virtually no wind and apart from catspaw ripples the surface was flat. The undulation could not be explained by wave action; and the progress from North to South could not be put down to wind drift. 'Rubia' was steered to pass directly over the position of the last observation.

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There was nothing to be seen. Some 2-3 minutes after this D.R-6 again saw "something" on the Port quarter but JOH did not get a look at it before it finally disappeared. The position of the original sighting was just over four miles from the Eastern end of the loch and virtually in the centre. There was no "wash" observed in association with either the first or second "sighting".

Mrs. Clark, Mrs MacLeod, August 1979. These two ladies were driving to Drumnadrochit from Inverness on August 31st, they were passing Temple Pier at about 4p.m. Mrs MacLeod attention was attracted by a man looking at the loch with binoculars. As she looked across the water she saw a large disturbance on the surface. The car was stopped, and they got out to watch. As they did so a large head appeared, on a snakelike neck. The head was flat and parallel to the water. It was dark in colour and they could not make out any details, but it was surprisingly close to the shore and heading further into the bay. They watched it for only a few seconds before it went down like a submarine, without a splash.

Acraman, August 1979. Roger Acraman, an 18 year old student, has been interested in Loch Ness for two or three years. This year after a visit to Loch Morar he was at Loch Ness to do some more watching. On August 6th he was on the pier at Fort Augustus, he had been joined by two other people, the time was 9.30 p.m. They saw a low lying black hump in the distance, Peter, one of his companions, said it had been there about 15 minutes and thought it was brushwood floating in the water. Then it started to move further out into the loch. They drove in Peter's car along the lochside past Inchnacardoch Bay, on the 3rd stop they managed to get to the waters edge. They were opposite Glendoe Lodge, and the hump was still to be seen through binoculars away to the north. They estimated the size was 15 feet long standing 3 feet out of the water.

McNish, September 1979. Mr and Mrs McNish and their family, took a holiday on one of the cabin cruisers on the Caledonia Canal this year. They had been camping by the loch many years ago, and knew the stories about the monster. They passed through Loch Ness at the beginning of their holiday without seeing anything, although they kept a camera to hand. On Thursday September 6th they were on their way back to Inverness and had left Fort Augustus along with other boats. At approximately 10.45 p.m. they passed another cruiser which was moving very slowly as the occupants were trolling a fishing line. Mrs McNish saw that there were two humps about 25 feet behind this cruiser, she thought that the man, whom they had previously met, was playing a joke. Then the humps, which were about 8 feet apart, changed course by 45 degrees although still moving in the same general direction as the boats. Mr McNish had now taken control of the boat and swung it round to the left, rather than put the engine into reverse. This was fortunate as it put them right where the humps were heading. Mrs McNish had picked up a pair of binoculars and was watching the humps with them. She estimated they were 50 feet away when she first saw them, and they were now moving straight towards their craft. Through the glasses the humps were darkish brown, about 15 inches high, and seemed to have the texture of moist skin. She had the impression of a grey mottled effect in the colour, and there could have been a third just under the surface at the rear. As the humps came towards the boat they slowly went under, and must have passed under them. Mrs McNish said the humps appeared to merge into a much wider shape under the surface. The whole episode lasted about a minute. The weather was warm and sunny with calm surface conditions. They were about a quarter of a mile offshore by the bluffs at Inchnacardoch.

Well that ends NIS 36, please remember your news and views are always needed, and if you change your address please let me know, Mine is still R.R.Heppele, Huntshieldsford, St.Joyns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, Telephone Wearhead 359. Subscriptions, U.K. £1.75. U.S.A. Canada \$7.00.

Rip.